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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the key laws, policies, and regulations and current or persistent issues associated with Tennessee public education. Two major questions directed the inquiry: What were the principal educational policy developments in Tennessee in the 1980s and 1990s? and What major educational challenges and issues currently exist in Tennessee? Data were collected from a literature review, content analysis of documents, and interviews with state-education-agency personnel and state leaders. Two major waves of reform are discussed--the Better Schools Program, implemented during the 1980s, and 21st Century Schools, to be implemented around the year 2000. The following issues addressed by recent state initiatives are discussed: (1) national educational goals and content standards; (2) early childhood education; (3) connections between schools, work, and lifelong learning; (4) high school restructuring; (5) broad-based coalitions of educators, parents, business, and community leaders addressing school needs; (6) accountability standards and school-performance goals; (7) leadership development; (8) decentralized decision-making and strategic planning of educational improvements; (9) technological resources to support instruction, school management, and policy research; (10) preparation and certification of educational professionals; (11) school safety; and (12) equity funding. (Contains 93 references.) (LMI)

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The University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152

Challenges and Issues in Tennessee Education: *A 1995 Profile*

E. Dean Butler

August 21, 1995

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The report draws heavily on the products of numerous national, state, or regional agencies and the scholarly writings of many individuals. While few citations to this literature are made in the text, appreciation is expressed to all those agencies and individuals whose products have been utilized in preparing this material.

Blake Burr-McNeal, Research Associate, Center for Research in Education Policy, participated in the inquiry from the beginning. She was especially helpful in the search for information and in providing editorial assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the key laws, policies, and regulations and current or persistent issues associated with Tennessee public education. Two major questions directed the inquiry: (a) What were the principal educational policy developments in Tennessee in the 1980s and 1990s? and (b) What major educational challenges and issues currently exist in Tennessee?

METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in conducting the inquiry was exploratory case study, a strategy which provides inductively generated insights or findings pertinent to the topic addressed. Key features of the strategy employed were (a) conducting a comprehensive, open-ended search for information and (b) inductively constructing a conceptual framework for reporting major themes or patterns reflected in the materials located.

First, a comprehensive search for information was planned and implemented. This search sought to identify policy-relevant documents, research and scholarly literature regarding Tennessee education, work plans and deliberations of educational task forces, and products of regional laboratories and national commissions. A limited exploration of press releases and newsletters was also conducted. Source materials included archival materials maintained by the Center for Research in Educational Policy, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) databases, and files accessible through the World Wide Web. Other relevant documents were located in The University of Memphis and Tennessee State Board of Education libraries. State educator leaders, after being informed of the search, provided numerous source documents. Interviews conducted with State Board of Education and State Department of Education personnel provided additional information.

Early in the investigation it became apparent that decisions influencing Tennessee education exist under various labels: policies, laws, goals, guidelines, plans, directives, rules, and regulations. For the purpose of this inquiry, policy was defined as the "accumulated standing decisions of a governing body by which it regulates, controls, promotes, services, and otherwise influences matters within its spheres of authority" (Guba, 1984). Two major types of primary source materials were used in generating the findings: (a) Tennessee school laws and (b)

Tennessee State Board of Education policies, master plans, meeting agendas, and advisory council reports.

Documentary/content analysis was the principal method used to inductively identify the major categories or themes reflected in the source materials. Analytical and interpretive strategies were used in framing major issues or challenges.

A preliminary draft of the report was reviewed by Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) staff and Tennessee representatives holding appointments as AEL board members. Tennessee State Board of Education and Department of Education personnel were provided draft copies for their review and critique. These individuals identified errors and omissions and suggested other sources of information. Interviews with selected state leaders provided information regarding current developments and plans for the future.

FINDINGS

Two Major Waves of Reform

The recent administrations of two Tennessee Governors, Lamar Alexander, Republican, elected for his first term in 1978, and Ned Ray McWherter, Democrat, first elected in 1986, are associated with two major "waves" of educational reform. The first, known as the Better Schools Program, occurred in the 1980s. The second, 21st Century Schools, is to be fully implemented around the year 2000.

Better Schools Program

Initiated in 1983-84, the Better Schools Program addressed needs associated with all levels of education. A curriculum referred to as Basic Skills First, support for art and music, computer literacy, and an expanded kindergarten program targeted the lower grades. Reforms at the secondary school level focused on additional requirements in science and math, proficiency tests, summer residential schools for gifted students, expansions of vocational education, and alternative schools for disruptive students. Provisions for post-secondary education involved expanded adult job skills training and Centers of Excellence. All Better Schools initiatives, except for Basic Skills First, have been extended into the present.

The Better Schools legislation also initiated reforms in school accountability and teacher education. Annual school district report cards were mandated and, consistent with reform proposals of the period attributing educational failure to teacher quality, the legislation called for changes in teacher education, certification of professional personnel, and professional development of inservice teachers and administrators. The most controversial reform was incentive pay for teachers and administrators, which came to be known as Career Ladder. The authorizing legislation, Comprehensive Education Reform Act (CERA) of 1984, was consistent with efforts of the 1980s in most states to improve schools through centralized authority and state-driven reforms.

Important to the Better Schools Program was the Public Educational Governance Reform Act (PEGRA) of 1984. This legislation established the State Board of Education as an independent agency, with an executive director and professional staff, and a clearly defined role in establishing policies for elementary and secondary education. Lay board members would be appointed by the Governor and approved by the legislature, with the Governor and Commissioner of Education no longer members. Responsibility for post-secondary vocational programs was assigned to the State Board of Regents of the State University and Community College System. Responsibility for implementing and enforcing board-approved policies, regulations and minimum standards, and all laws pertaining to elementary and secondary education was assigned to the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Education.

21st Century Schools

Following the election of Ned Ray McWherter as Governor in 1989, numerous State Board of Education and legislative enactments articulated policy directives providing the conceptual framework for Tennessee's 21st Century Schools as revitalization and continuation of reforms initiated in the 1980s. The policy focus was on systemic reform: the state would be responsible for establishing standards and providing resources, and local schools and school districts would be expected to plan and implement improvements that were consistent with state priorities yet sensitive to local needs. Prior to passage of the main education legislation, the Tennessee 2000 Challenge Act mandated the development of measurable educational goals and accountability policies. The 1990 Master Plan for Tennessee Schools focused on three key areas: (a)

establishing 21st Century Classrooms, (b) creating rational, workable, accountable governance systems, and (c) providing adequate and sustained school funding. To support decentralized school governance, the State Board of Education eliminated over 3,700 rules, regulations, and minimum standards determined to be unnecessary, overly restrictive, or obsolete.

Governor McWherter's educational restructuring proposal sought to achieve two major outcomes: (a) achieve fundamental changes in the management, the standards, and the accountability of schools, and (b) transform the way in which schools operate. The resulting legislation, called the Educational Improvement Act (EIA) of 1992, authorized the 21st Century Schools Program and a new fiscal policy for funding public education. The funding formula, designated as the Basic Education Program (BEP), was designed to provide basic quality education for every child in Tennessee, with provisions made for estimating variations of cost-of-living in the districts.

Major reforms initiated with the 21st Century Schools Program included value-added assessment; establishment of school district and school performance goals, and performance incentives and state sanctions for schools and systems that fail to meet those goals; and a new Office of Educational Accountability. School autonomy was expanded and school-based decision making encouraged. All members of local Boards of Education were to be elected and participate in annual training. Administrative reforms included the appointment of superintendents, revised credentialing of school principals, and establishment of performance contracts for principals and other non-tenured school personnel.

New or expanded initiatives in secondary schools included restructuring of curricula, revised graduation requirements, exit examinations, raising of the compulsory school age, and expansion of alternative schools. Attendance at an approved kindergarten program was required for entering the first grade and early childhood family resource centers were authorized. Legislation also specified that the K-12 curriculum must include multi-cultural diversity and that required instruction in Black History and Culture must be monitored. Average pupil-teacher ratios and maximum class sizes for K-3, 4-6, and 7-12 were established. A non-instructional day was set aside for parent-teacher conferences, and guidelines were established for "break-the-mold" schools.

Also initiated was a technology program containing two major components: Tennessee Education Network (TEN) Student Information System and high-tech classrooms. TEN, scheduled to be operational in the fall of 1995,

was authorized as a data and instructional communications network linking all schools and school system central offices with the State Department of Education. The 21st Century Classroom Project created high-tech classrooms. Funds were also authorized for supporting innovative instructional technology initiatives, salaries for technology coordinators, and training of teachers for integrating technology into classroom instruction.

The 1995 Master Plan and Goals 2000

Following passage of Goals 2000: Educate America Act by the U. S. Congress in 1994, the 1995 Master Plan for Tennessee Schools extended provisions of the EIA of 1992, clarified priority issues, and incorporated the eight national goals. Recommendations of a 1993 study sponsored by the Tennessee Business Roundtable were also used in developing nine goal priorities addressing early childhood education and parent involvement, primary and middle grades, high schools, technology, professional development and teacher education, accountability and assessment, school leadership and school-based decision making, school safety, and funding.

Encouraging Local Initiatives - The 1995 Focus

The current Governor Don Sundquist initiated a six-point plan to build on the educational progress realized under the leadership of Governors Alexander and McWherter. Continued decentralization of educational authority is clearly evident in the call for more localized decision making, expansion of locally developed programs, and use of accountability procedures to help school systems improve. Expanded professional development, special emphasis on pre-kindergarten through third grade, and stronger links between "learning and earning" through partnerships between schools and businesses and expansion of Jobs for Tennessee Graduates have also been stated as priorities.

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

Presented here are summaries of recent developments associated with priority goals addressed in the 1995 Master Plan for Tennessee Schools. Major challenges and issues relating to these goals are identified.

Early Childhood Education and Parent Involvement

In November 1991, the State Board of Education adopted a Policy on Early Childhood and Parent Involvement with major focus on programs to forge partnerships between communities, schools, and parents prior to the time when children are school-age. The intent was to use state funds to complement the federally supported Head Start program so that all economically disadvantaged children and their families are served. In accordance with the Early Childhood Education Act of 1994 and an implementation plan approved by the State Board of Education in December 1994, pilot site funding was to be obtained in 1995-96 as part of a three-year phase-in with full implementation by the year 2002. A state advisory council and local training consortia would assist in implementing components of plan. The General Assembly did not authorize funding in 1995.

In order to address issues associated with national and state goals of readiness to learn, Tennessee needs to provide quality early childhood education for all at-risk three- and four-year-olds and provide family services for primary caregivers. Strong parent involvement and community collaborations do not exist for many children. An estimated 12,000 Tennessee children and their families are not being served in existing programs.

Elementary, Middle, and High School Education

National Goals and Standards

A historic change is taking place in American education with current efforts to establish new standards and goals for subject matter content, opportunities-to-learn, and assessment as part of a plan to create a world-class system of education for the 21st century. National professional and scholarly organizations are developing and publishing new curricula in music education, the natural sciences, English, mathematics, and geography.

In addition to school reform efforts of the National Goals for Education Panel, recommendations of several other national groups will also influence state policy developments during the next five years. These groups include the National Education Standards and Improvement Council, National Education Commission on Time and Learning, National Assessment of Educational

Progress, National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and the National Commission on Excellence in Education.

The 21st Century Schools Program has been approved as Tennessee's plan for implementing Goals 2000 legislation. Priorities in 1995 included school-collegiate partnerships, upgrading teachers' knowledge of content areas, and professional development of teachers working with disadvantaged students or those with limited-English proficiency or learning disabilities. Goals 2000 funds were used to support fourteen pilots addressing these priorities during the 1994-95 school year. Tennessee is incorporating new content standards in the curriculum framework being revised in a six-year cycle coordinated by the State Department of Education.

Break-the-Mold Schools

Resulting from the 1989 Education Summit which created National Education Goals was a related effort that led to the formation of the New American Schools Development Corporation (NASDC). In July 1992, NASDC authorized nationally-known design teams to conduct a two-year effort to implement and test "break-the-mold" school models in a variety of school-community contexts. Phase 3, scheduled for the 1995-96 school year, will involve implementation and assessment of the designs in selected jurisdictions around the nation. A Tennessee school district (Memphis) has been designated as one of eleven jurisdictions for implementing NASDC prototypes during the 1995-96 school year. The Tennessee General Assembly, anticipating innovative schools as part of the America 2000 agenda, provided guidelines for the establishment and implementation of "break-the-mold" schools in EIA of 1992.

Partnership Collaborations

Involvement of the business and corporate community in Tennessee school improvement efforts is well known. On-going efforts of the Tennessee Business Roundtable at both state and local levels confirm business and corporate commitments to education. Tech Prep consortia involving educators and business representatives exist in all areas of the state, and school-to-work coalitions are developing model programs to enhance school- and work-based learning experiences. Corporate involvement includes partnerships; contributions of money, equipment, awards and incentives; participation in professional development programs; and job training for students.

In addition, a variety of state and local partnerships involve higher education and public school personnel in work force preparation, teacher preparation, student career opportunities, teacher inservice and exchange, information exchange, and articulation between high school and college. School and community partnerships provide adult sponsors and mentoring for students, school volunteers and adoptions, and a multitude of social, recreational, and educational services. A limited knowledge base exists, however, regarding how to create, manage, and use partnerships in accomplishing systemic reform.

Redesigning Schools as Learning Communities

Schools as learning communities consist of a variety of cultural, structural, and regulatory features that provide foundational support for teaching and learning. These features energize and empower teachers, build aspirations, stimulate student engagement and motivation to learn, and provide stable patterns of meanings, norms, and expectations. At the same time, school context factors, which may be implicit and unacknowledged, can negate efforts to improve, reform, or change educational forms and practices at all levels. To foster increased students engagement and identification, which in turn impacts motivation to learn and achievement, changes are needed in school regulatory features, including flexible school rules that do not alienate students, fair and effective disciplinary procedures, evaluation and reward systems compatible with student abilities, and fostering of student responsibilities for self, others, and their surroundings.

For a variety of reasons, Tennessee schools differ considerably in providing supportive learning communities. Policy makers, educators, and parents recognize that major challenges and a host of issues are associated with reforming the learning environments of Tennessee schools, including (a) incorporating content, opportunity-to-learn, and performance standards into classroom instruction; (b) implementing active learning and innovative instructional strategies; (c) providing for the inclusion of students with disabilities; (d) integrating technology and curricula; (e) achieving high school restructuring; (f) accomplishing school detracking and building cultures of high expectations; (g) addressing special needs of middle school learners; (h) reducing teacher-pupil ratios; (i) providing professional development and technical assistance relevant to needs of individual schools; (j) increasing linkages between

schools, industry, and postsecondary education; (k) expanding adult high schools and year-round literacy programs to increase the number of adults with high-school education; and (l) developing school capacities to achieve excellence.

Technology

Computer technology has been installed in over 4,000 classrooms, and initial training has been provided for assisting teachers to integrate technology and instruction. The Tennessee Education Network (TEN) will link all schools and school district offices with the State Department of Education. Salary support and training for technology coordinators at the district level have been provided. Long-range technology plans are being formulated to provide additional professional development in technology, link researchers and practitioners in planning and implementing research, and enhance student learning opportunities by interfacing classrooms via networks and distance learning.

TEN will provide new opportunities for collecting and analyzing administrative records to be used in policy-oriented studies and decentralized decision-making and strategic-planning efforts. Achievement profiles generated by the State Testing and Evaluation Center and the Center for Value-Added Research and Assessment hold promise for diagnosing student skills and competencies and planning appropriate instruction.

Issues include fiscal resources for new and replacement technology; expansion of the technology infrastructure; interfacing of computer networks; assistance to educators, researchers, and policy makers in effectively using the information management system; and addressing teachers' attitudes, knowledge, and use of multimedia tools for information retrieval, manipulation, knowledge production, and presentation.

Professional Personnel

Career Ladder Program

Tennessee is recognized as a leader in teacher education reform and the first state to implement a status and incentive pay plan for practitioners. The Career Ladder Program was initiated in the fall of 1984 and evaluation systems for administrators, supervisors, and other professionals were developed within a year. In 1987, the General Assembly made the program optional and a revised

evaluation plan developed. Employment of Career Ladder professionals through summer-extended contracts to serve student needs identified through locally developed assessments was initiated in 1988. More than 9000 educators are now on the upper levels. Each year around 1200 educators apply for and approximately 750 complete the process. Funding in fiscal year 1995 was $106.2 million.

Career Ladder, with provisions for local options, separate funding, and certifying processes, has been institutionalized as a largely independent component of the state's educational bureaucracy. No mention of the Career Ladder Program is found in current reform planning documents, and Career Ladder professionals have surprisingly low public visibility. How Career Ladder interfaces with the restructuring of Tennessee education is not known.

Preparation of Educational Professionals

Resulting from CERA was a new Teacher Education Policy approved in 1988 with changes in Tennessee teacher preparation programs planned for implementation over an eight-year period. The first students graduated under the new standards were licensed in 1994. Program components implemented in all teacher education institutions in Tennessee included a strong liberal arts core, an academic major, and a focused professional education core. Teacher education programs must satisfy National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards or similar state-developed standards. All prospective teachers must complete at least a semester of enhanced student teaching; many participate in a full-year internship. Teacher preparation program reviews were initiated in 1991; by spring 1995, 26 programs had been evaluated. A comprehensive evaluation planned for 1996-97 will assess the teacher education policy, standards, guidelines, and accomplishments.

Professional Development Schools and other innovative school and university partnerships provide preservice experiences in diverse community settings. Superintendents, principals, teachers, supervisors, and parents acknowledge the improved competencies and commitments of novice teachers prepared in Tennessee. Mentor teachers in the schools provide new teacher support, and beginning teacher programs offer a variety of services. In follow-up studies, beginning teachers rate highly their internships, feedback from cooperating teachers and university supervisors, subject matter preparation, and professional studies (Nunnery, Etheridge, & Bhaireddy, 1994). Lowest recent

ratings of the preparation programs have been related to the use of computers for instructional purposes, working effectively with principals, and strategies for dealing with student diversity.

Increasing preservice knowledge and skills in instructional technology was addressed with the adoption of technology standards for teacher licensure in September 1994. Standards specify that technology knowledge and skills be integrated into teacher education programs and emphasized in internships and student teaching. Knowledge and skills specified in the licensure standards parallel the technology competencies identified for 21st Century Classroom teachers.

Demographic projections indicate that public school student populations will increasingly be heterogeneous and culturally diverse. Inclusion of students with disabilities into regular classrooms suggests that teachers will be faced with increased student diversity in the future. Also, teachers must be prepared to work effectively as members of school leadership teams, making decisions about curricula, instructional approaches, and even budgets and personnel. Thus, it is critical that preservice programs prepare teachers so that they can address diverse student needs and fully participate as teacher leaders.

Teacher supply and demand overall in Tennessee are currently in balance, but goal attainment relating to preparation and employment of minorities has not been realized. The training and employment of minority teachers is, however, being addressed. Although only 5.5 percent of undergraduates enrolled in public and private teacher education programs were African-Americans in 1993, the total number increased from 78 in 1987 to 286 in 1993. A jobs registry for teaching and administrative applicants has been established by the Tennessee School Boards Association.

A new policy in 1991, later revised in 1994 to incorporate provisions of EIA, presented a set of provisions designed to provide qualified candidates for school principal positions and to promote successes in that role. Standards included those relating to recruitment and selection, revised licensing process, satisfactory performance on a state required test/assessment, academic preparation and professional growth, and performance assessment. New policy guidelines for supervisors of instruction were developed in 1994 in concert with the revised policy for principals.

Professional Development

The continuous education of educational professionals in Tennessee was established as a priority in the Tennessee policy agenda evolving from CERA of 1984. As a result, state-level approaches to professional development took a variety of forms. Three statewide councils for superintendents, instructional supervisors, and school principals, referred to as Administrative Study Councils, provide opportunities for school leaders to systematically examine programs, practices, and issues associated with Tennessee education. A fourth council, the Tennessee Teachers Study Council, developed in 1983 during the debate over incentive pay for teachers, serves as a state-wide communications network for teachers. Teacher concerns, ideas, and questions generated at the local school are prioritized and developed into resolutions for presentation to the Commissioner of Education. State-level planning committees and state department personnel plan and implement Council-sponsored activities.

The Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) provides opportunities for educational personnel to continuously grow as educators, leaders, managers, and change agents for the purpose of improving student learning. TASL professional growth opportunities are designed to serve administrative or supervisory personnel directly associated with instruction. The Tennessee Executive Development Program, approved by the State Board of Education in 1986, provides professional development activities for Tennessee school superintendents. A variety of independent study options along with state-wide, regional, and national institutes have been used annually to foster leadership development of the chief school officers in the State.

Planned to accompany Career Ladder evaluation, a professional development initiative, known as The Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM), contained instructional modules designed for preparing persons wishing to enter the Career Ladder program through the fast-track option. TIM incorporated state-of-the art professional knowledge and best practices associated with classroom pedagogy, curriculum development, and school management. Depending on local initiatives and needs, TIM remains in use for new teacher induction, for refresher experiences, and for a variety of professional growth activities. Knowledge and competencies incorporated in TIM have also been integrated into preservice teacher preparation curricula.

A professional development policy, authorized by the State Board of Education in 1992, addressed the changing roles of principals and supervisors

and established school, district, and state responsibilities to facilitate the development of schools as learning communities. The policy specifies that schools are to plan and implement site-focused professional development programs which address improvement needs and state priorities. Furthermore, professional growth is to be an integral part of school life and time is to be allocated for it. State funds support five days of inservice, and a recent provision permits professional development to be incorporated into the regular work day. In February 1995, the State Board of Education approved a rule change to permit schools to expand school days from 6 1/2 hours to at least seven hours. The additional 2 1/2 hours each week can be used for early dismissal so teachers can participate in professional development activities. The intent of the change is to integrate professional development into the school work environment. A statewide clearinghouse of information regarding innovative practices will be available for teachers through the state's technology network.

A variety of new roles for teacher leaders now exists. While the role of mentor teacher has been established in Tennessee, other roles, such as lead teacher or team leader, site-team leader or teacher researcher, teacher-as-reflective-practitioner, or in-building staff developer, have not been clearly defined or utilized in most schools. These innovative roles need to be encouraged in future professional growth opportunities as means of empowering teachers, building professionalism, and enhancing student learning.

Accountability and Assessment

Developed as an early component of Tennessee's accountability system was a student assessment program called the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Initiated in 1989-90, TCAP was designed as a series of standardized tests developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill Company. Norm-referenced tests, used to assess student achievement in grades 2-8 and grade 10, were incorporated by legislation into the value-added assessment model authorized in 1992. Criterion-referenced tests are used to measure mastery of math and language arts curricula in grades 2-8. A TCAP Proficiency Test was replaced in 1995 by the new Tennessee Student Competency Test. A statewide writing assessment was administered for the first time in fall 1994. CTB/McGraw-Hill has a contract to develop subject matter tests for high school

students, with mathematics tests scheduled for spring 1996 and others to be phased in by spring 1999.

Performance goals associated with academic gain, attendance, dropout rate, and promotion have been approved by the State Board of Education. Proficiency rate will be associated with a fifth goal after three years of new proficiency data have been obtained. An incentive program for awarding districts for achieving performance goals was also authorized with the first funds awarded to 120 schools in fall 1994. Although a process for identifying schools and school districts failing to meet performance goals and standards has been approved, implementing the probationary process targeted for October 1995 will be delayed because of issues that have emerged in recent months.

The Office of Education Accountability has been assigned responsibility for annual school district compliance and performance audits. State Report Cards summarize the progress of each district and school in meeting the goals. Reporting of value-added results by classroom, scheduled for 1995, has been delayed because use of student performance data in judging teacher performance is an especially sensitive issue.

Given that value-added assessment is viewed by both professional and lay persons as controversial, numerous public policy issues, as well as technical issues, have emerged related to the value-added statistical process employed in estimating Tennessee district, school, and teacher effects on student achievement. In addition to the newness and complexity of the system, other concerns relate to measurement technology used, inadequate validation of the model, benchmarks established, variations in national norm gains and value-added scores from year to year, and potential for unintended use of achievement scores.

Current indications in Tennessee suggest that wide-spread public support does not exist for enforcement of educational accountability and performance standards mandated in 1992. A Testing Task Force is currently developing recommendations in regard to student assessments. Questions and issues associated with the accountability system were presented to the General Assembly by the Office of Education Accountability in April 1995 with a request that a comprehensive evaluation be authorized (Snodgrass, 1995).

School Governance and Leadership

During the late 1980s, numerous Tennessee educational reforms were grounded on the belief that individual school units should be the foci of change. Authority for school improvement was increasingly viewed as the shared responsibility of educators, parents, and, occasionally, students. Various efforts in Tennessee have sought to implement this perspective.

Local School Governance

School-Based Decision Making. School-based decision making, incorporating concepts of total quality management and deregulated schools, developed in Tennessee between 1988 and 1990. In 1990, the State Department began to accept applications from schools districts wishing to deregulate schools. That year 24 districts reported they were implementing some features of school-based-decision-making (SBDM) (Valesky, Smith, & Fitzgerald, 1990). By 1991, 250 principals reported use of SBDM. A recent follow-up investigation of the Memphis sites implementing SBDM validates the promise the management strategy holds for fostering school improvements which lead to increased student learning (Etheridge & Hall, 1995).

Improvement of School Environments. As part of the school decentralization movement, a project focusing on the school as the unit for change was initiated in 1989 with Positive Attitudes in Tennessee Schools (PATS) (Pike & Chandler, 1989). The state-wide collaboration involves school leadership teams, State Department of Education personnel, and university researchers using data-based, or informed, decision making and planning in addressing issues relating to the quality of workplace environments for teaching and learning (Butler & Alberg, 1993). Now in its sixth year, the project has demonstrated that school cultures can be transformed and that more equitable distributions of student achievement are associated with supportive learning environments (Nunnery & Butler, 1994)

Strategic Planning. Strategic planning of school improvements was initiated in the late 1980s as part of a growing concerns for accountability. Local boards of education were directed to develop five-year strategic planning as a means of improving school performance and providing accountability. Initial plans were submitted for review and approval in 1990. Revision were scheduled

for 1995. School-level strategic planning of improvements have been encouraged through various state and district initiatives.

Challenges and Issues Relating to Governance and Leadership

Elected and appointed education leaders are expected to be well prepared and responsible for improved performance of schools and school systems. Legislation and State Board of Education actions have addressed the following: (a) election of all local boards of education and appointment of superintendents; (b) new guidelines for the preparation and licensure of principals and supervisors; (c) revised role expectations for principals employed under performance contracts; (d) development of school and school district improvement plans through strategic planning; (e) elimination of conflicting and unnecessary state rules and regulations; (f) refocusing of state-level leadership development programs; (g) support for beginning administrators; (h) annual required training for school board members; and (i) development of shared school leadership.

Several recent studies in Tennessee have sought to determine the status of school governance, planning, and leadership. Wide variations have been found for strategic planning, with limited staff time, funds, and technical assistance available (Snodgrass, 1992). Planning grants, technical assistance, and a state bureau of planning were among the recommendations. Tennessee school superintendents and school board chairs maintain important perceptual differences regarding functions and role responsibilities and differ in preferences regarding the functions of school-based management (Nelson, 1992; Scott, 1992). One inquiry concluded that traditional administrative roles must be changed dramatically if site-based management programs in Tennessee are to be successful (Haywood, 1992). Tennessee parents indicate they desire more active involvement in decision making (Clark, 1994).

Major challenges associated with leadership and governance issues are summarized as follows:

- achieving quality and effective use of school improvement plans (development of competencies in strategic planning, interpretation and use of data)

- attaining school board elections and appointment of superintendents by 2000;

- developing competencies and commitments relative to shared leadership and decentralized decision making;
- building school and school district capacities to plan, implement, and assess educational improvement; and
- enhancing school board member competencies.

School Safety

Issues and problems that inhibit attainment of the national goal of providing safe, disciplined, and alcohol- and drug-free schools are being addressed through a 1994 school safety policy. The policy authorized a state-wide safety center, an advisory council to the State Board of Education, and a committee to assess the status of safety in the schools. School systems are to formulate codes of conduct, develop and implement safety plans, provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution, and develop emergency procedures to deal with outbreaks of violence.

Major challenges exist in regard to insuring that all Tennessee students attend safe, disciplined schools. School variations across Tennessee communities range from disciplined environments reflecting a sense of purposefulness and acceptance of boundaries established for insuring safe and orderly schools to disorder and fears regarding personal safety in school buildings and campuses. Numerous state and local efforts, with assistance provided by law enforcement personnel and parent or community volunteers, are being implemented as means of addressing school safety issues.

Equity Funding

The current education funding formula, authorized in 1992, was designed to provide basic quality education for every child in Tennessee. A 1994 plan detailed the financial resources needed to achieve Tennessee's educational goals and accountability standards with for 91% funding in fiscal year 1996 and full funding by fiscal year 1998. The plan also calls for funds to support the 21st Century Classroom initiative, information management system, high school restructuring, early childhood education and family resource centers, assistance to schools in meeting accountability standards, training in technology, and additional Career Ladder teachers.

The Tennessee Supreme Court, which addressed issues in a suit initiated by rural schools in March 1993, heard additional arguments in October 1994 on the constitutionality of the planned phase-in of the new formula. Testimony indicated that $300 million was needed to fully fund education and to bring teacher salaries and buildings in poor areas to levels comparable to those in richer districts. Between 1991 and 1994, Tennessee led the nation in improved funding of preK-12 schools, reflecting an increase of 49 percent. Full funding of the new formula remains a goal to be accomplished.

Challenges faced in Tennessee relative to financial support for education rest in part on revenue obtained from sales taxes and other consumer use taxes. Tennessee has no personal income tax. The McWherter administration was unable to generate support for an income tax on adjusted gross income. Tennessee citizens pay less in state and local taxes per $100 of personal income than citizens in any other state; the combined state and local tax burden places Tennessee 50th of the 50 states. Tax reform may be necessary if equity funding for education is to exist.

CONCLUSIONS

During two recent administrations of two Tennessee Governors, Lamar Alexander, Republican, elected for his first term in 1978, and Ned Ray McWherter, Democrat, first elected in 1986, Tennessee took bold steps to ensure that the state's schools are among the best in the nation. Issues addressed by recent initiatives include: (a) national educational goals and content standards, (b) early childhood education; (c) connections between schools, work, and lifelong learning; (d) high school restructuring; (e) broad-based coalitions of educators, parents, business, and community leaders addressing school needs; (f) accountability standards and school performance goals; (g) leadership development; (h) decentralized decision-making and strategic planning of educational improvements; (i) technological resources to support instruction, school management, and policy research; (j) preparation and credentialing of educational professionals; (k) school safety; and (l) equity funding.

New and challenging state policies and master plans provide a coherent strategy in Tennessee to support the development of high-performance schools. The challenge is to successfully engage and support educators in the schools in mobilizing resources in the communities to design and implement learning

communities that will raise achievement and insure educational equity for all learners.

Quality of basic education for all learners remains a primary concern in Tennessee, a human resource development priority, and an issue critical to continued economic growth of the state, region, and nation. High school graduation rates need to rise, and more students need to be prepared for college-level instruction. Annual surveys of business executives report many students are inadequately prepared for entry-level employment or for training in new technologies. Business leaders are calling for improved school-to-work transitions and desire increased access to resources of the schools and universities.

Recommendations offered by the National Governors Conference (1992) seem especially relevant to Tennessee: state-level officials need to communicate clearly the reform goals and directions to the public, overcome reluctance to change, create long-term solutions in the face of short-term pressures, and support and sustain system-wide human resource development. Systemic education reform in Tennessee is associated with a variety of issues also being addressed in other states (Fuhrman & Massell, 1992). Questions that seem especially relevant and timely to Tennessee policy makers, researchers, and education leaders are:

(1) What additional policies are needed to support integrated and focused reform strategies at the district and school levels?

(2) What policy instruments and mechanisms available to state and local leaders hold promise for supporting and sustaining systemic education reforms?

(3) How should public and professional involvement in school reform be stimulated, supported and managed?

(4) What additional political support for systemic reform is needed?

(5) How can decentralized or "bottom-up" reforms be encouraged, supported, and incorporated within state curriculum frameworks and strong accountability standards?

(6) What resources and services do school personnel need in order to build capacities to provide quality education that increases student outcomes?

(7) What are the equity implications of systemic reform strategies being implemented or planned?

(8) Can school reform initiated in Tennessee withstand state fiscal stress?

(9) What are the major information needs of policy makers and school leaders regarding the status of school reform in Tennessee?

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